

Message Text

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ACTION CPR-01

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 /035 W

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R 130930Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7613

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0672

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, GB,PSK

SUBJ: AGREEMENT REQUEST FOR NEW GABONESE AMBASSADOR

REFS: LIBREVILLE 337, 368, 378

1. PRESIDENT BONGO TELEPHONED EMBASSY MORNING AORIL 12 TO INQUIRE WHY USG HAD NOT YET GIVEN AGREEMENT TO NEW AMBASSADOR HE WAS PROPOSING AS REPLACEMENT FOR MAVOUNGOU IN WASHINGTON. I REPLIED THAT I WAS CONFUSED ABOUT WHICH AMBASSADOR HE MEANT SINCE WE HAD NEVER RECEIVED FORMAL REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT. PRESIDENT SOUNDED INCREDULOUS AND AUDIBLY DEMANDED OF FONMIN OKUMBA IN OFFICE WITH HIM IF HE HAD SENT REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT TO EMBASSY. OKUMBA MUST HAVE REPLIED THAT HEHAD DONE SO, BECAUSE BONGO CAME BACK ON LINE TO SAY THAT FONMIN WOULD SEND US COPY OF AGREEMENT REQUEST FOR RENE KOMBILI. I ASSURED PRESIDENT THAT WE WOULD TRANSMIT REQUEST TO WASHINGTON AT ONCE AND THATNORMALLY AT LEAST THREE WEEKS WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR AGREEMENT. PRESIDENT CLOSED HIS CONVERSATION WITH STATEMENT, "THREE WEEKS; THAT IS TOO LONG".

2. AMBASSADOR STEIGMAN AND FONMIN OKUMBA HAD DISCUSSED RENE KOMBILI AS POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTE FOR PIERRE MEBALEY ON FEBRUARY 27. DURING THAT CONVERSATION OKUMBA WAS EXPLICIT IN PROMISING AMBASSADOR THAT WHEN GOG CHOICE WAS FINAL HE WOULD SEND DIPLOMATIC NOTE WITH FULL CURRICULUM VITAE REQUESTING AGREEMENT THROUGH EMBASSY IN ORDER TO

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AVOID SNAFFU WHICH DEVELOPED WHEN MEBALAY REQUEST FOR

AGREEMENT HAD BEEN MAILED DIRECTLY TO DEPARTMENT IN WASHINGTON AND WAS APPARENTLY LOST IN THE MAIL. HOWEVER, NO SUCH NOTE HAS YET ARRIVED AT EMBASSY.

3. COMMENT: THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR LATEST MISUNDERSTANDING OVER AGREEMENT FOR NEW GABONESE AMBASSADOR: (1) PRESIDENT, AND PERHAPS FONMIN AS WELL, THOUGHT THAT KOMBILI HAD BEEN FORMALLY PROPOSED BUT IN FACT DIPLOMATIC NOTE HAD NEVER BEEN SENT, OR (2) NOTE WAS ACTUALLY SENT BUT HAS BEEN DELAYED IN REACHING EMBASSY. LATTER IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE SINCE 30 DAYS IS NOT UNUSUALLY LONG DELAY FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY TO REACH EMBASSY. IN ANY CASE, IT IS NOW APPARENT THAT KOMBILI IS FINAL CHOICE AND THAT BONGO IS PRESSING FOR RAPID ACCREDITATION OF NEW AMBASSADOR. HIS URGENCY MAY BE RELATED TO PENDING REQUEST FOR USG ASSISTANCE (DISCUSSED SEPTTEL).

4. WE WILL FOLLOW UP PERSONALLY WITH FONMIN OKUMBA TO ENSURE COPY OF DIPLOMATIC NOTE DOES NOT GO ASTRAY.DEJARNETTR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE, AGREEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cahillha
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LIBREV00672
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760139-0516
From: LIBREVILLE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760468/aaaacftp.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION CPR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 LIBREVILLE 337
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cahillha
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2004 by cahillha>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AGREEMENT REQUEST FOR NEW GABONESE AMBASSADOR
TAGS: PDIP, GB, (KOMBILI, RENE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006